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ABSTRACT

Legislation affecting scientific libraries in Finland
is reviewed in the areas of staffing, inter-library cooperation,
library financing, qualifications for scientific library posts,
economic administration, and planning. (RAO)

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The Impact of Legislation Upon Management

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THE IMPACT OF LEGISLATION UPON MANAGEMENT

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1. There are very few laws and statutes in Finland concerning libraries. The state aid for public libraries is established into details. The copyright law contains regulations on free copies to libraries, and thus the law also concerns the libraries which receive those copies. The legislation on universities and colleges includes in some cases very detailed descriptions about the qualifications of library staff, but seldom anything about the library's goals and objectives, methods of activity, etc. There are some stipulations on cooperation of scientific libraries (central libraries and the cooperative organ of scientific libraries and information services); and that is about all.

On the other hand there are laws and statutes which in many cases concern libraries in the same way as they concern state institutions and their staff in general.

The impact of legislation on library management can be characterized by the facts that there is no legislation in some essential areas of library activity, and therefore libraries do not have enough support for instance for their efforts concerning division of labour, job descriptions, and resources, and that the existing laws and statutes are very general and don't pay any attention to the special features of library activity.

2. Public libraries in Finland are municipal institutions. They receive state aid, however, from 51 to 86 % of their ordinary expenditure according to their economic capacity class. In order to receive the state aid public libraries must meet certain requirements, regulated by the Library Law and Decree, and this is controlled by the state. There is a special central unit for public libraries, established solely for this reason.

C. 75 % of Finnish scientific libraries belong to public institutions and c. 25 % to private enterprises. C. 85 % of collections of scientific literature belong to universities and colleges, and c. 85-95 % of services mentioned in the official library statistics come from their libraries. Even though these figures are not exact they reflect the fact that the libraries of universities and colleges are responsible for the major part of library and information activity in the country.

I shall discuss the subject mainly from the point of view of scientific libraries. Paradoxical as it may be, there are much more detailed regulations on libraries which only receive state aid (public libraries) than on libraries which belong to the state. (scientific libraries). The reason for this situation is probably the fact that scientific libraries are a heterogenous group and therefore more difficult to regulate than public libraries; or the fact that their proprietary relationship is different. Their activity is seen as a part of the activity of the universities and colleges which are autonomous, at least to some extent. Therefore the establishing of a new servicepoint of a public library, for instance, needs a complicated decision process while scientific libraries in Finland simply spring up; they are seldom established. It is true that the Law on the Development of Institutions of Higher Education contains a statement that university and college buildings must be duly furnished with equipment, collections, and libraries. Since this statement is not specified, the Law, which was enacted in 1966 and led into a very powerful expansion of universities and colleges in the late 1960's and early 1970's, does not impose the development of libraries upon those institutions. Some of them have in fact started without a library at all. When the number of students and teachers is growing and the areas of study and teaching as well, this does not necessarily mean that libraries will have more resources.

There are no regulations on the number of staff in scientific libraries correlating the number of students etc., neither on the ratio between professional and non-professional staff. Universities and colleges cannot with their own efforts help their libraries in a significant way, either. Even if they are autonomous in theory, in practice their possibilities to handle e.g. the

allowances are very small. The allowances are assorted by the state budget in detail and the sums may not be transferred from one category to another. We have no experience about the situation in which the universities and colleges would get a total sum of money intended to be divided by the university or college itself for its expenses, and therefore we cannot tell if the situation of the libraries would then be better or worse. Allowances for acquisition and so-called maintenance (including office supplies, equipment maintenance, utilities etc.) are nowadays divided by the universities and colleges themselves, and it seems to have a negative result for the libraries in many cases.

Because the institutions of higher education are decentralized in Finland to a large extent, and the resources of each library unit are very modest, the cooperation between the libraries has been extensive since the 1930's. This cooperation has been accepted by the state in the form of Cabinet Resolution in 1972, which contains the definitions of the tasks of central scientific libraries and requisitions of those libraries, and another resolution in 1977, which directs five libraries to be central libraries (a central library for technology was existing already). These resolutions also oblige the fact that the central libraries to serve the public coming from outside the university, patrons of other universities as well as representatives of economic life and public administration. There are no economic conclusions drawn from the resolutions instead; e.g. some decisions that the central libraries should receive extra resources in order to give service for outsiders.

One reason why the situation is as described is the fact that there is no central unit for scientific libraries to coordinate them and attend their interests. The existing central organs either work in a limited field (automated data processing) or are advisory in character (Council of Scientific Information and Research Libraries). On the other hand legal problems would arise if the libraries received restrictive orders from outside their own university or college.

3. The impact of the existing laws and statutes can mainly be seen

in the areas of personnel and library economy. As said before, the library's activity is regulated by the same laws and decrees which concern all civil servants or people employed by the state, and state institutions in general. Like everywhere else, the contracts and agreements made by labour unions play a more and more important role.

The formal qualifications for the posts of scientific libraries are remarkably demanding; they are more like the qualifications required from university teachers and research workers than from librarians (high academic degrees, publications). When special requirements of training in librarianship and experience in library work are added, usually nothing else is left out of other requirements, and therefore the library directors as well as middle management are actually required an education for two professions and an exceptionally good knowledge of languages. It is difficult to establish a new category of occupations (there is hardly any official title of "information scientist" in state libraries). The existing official titles cannot be used in libraries as they are used in state offices, e.g. because the departmentalization in libraries differs from that in state offices, or because the salary level of libraries is lower. The salaries of the civil servants are tightly categorized by salary classes, and it is almost impossible to change them. Paying extra benefit is also almost impossible. Vacations and sick leaves are available to librarians like to other civil servants, but remuneration for "inconvenient working time" because of the opening hours in a library can be given only to some of the staff. The stiff personnel structure often prevents the introduction of new modes of activity. It is difficult to fit new staff members with new kind of training (e.g. information officers and scientists) into the frame of traditional qualifications and official titles, and new official titles cannot be created. In the personnel policy of the state institutions there is a trend that formal qualifications are made more flexible, too specific titles are deleted and those which are left are broadened. Librarians and especially their professional associations (unions) still think that strict qualifications of a high level are needed to strengthen the status of the libraries and to improve the salaries. They seem to be right, since the fact that library and information services do not exist in the main institutions of public administration (ministries, central offices, district offices)

or people with no professional training are in charge of them. The present qualifications may cause the effect, however, that there are few persons to fit the formal competence, or none at all, even though there are in fact many good candidates who could do the job. This being the situation the staff selection and appointment are made from a very limited group. It would be worthwhile to consider if the libraries need more new, specified and tightly defined official titles, or should the old ones just be broadened so that e.g. information scientists could be appointed as librarians even if they have not the "traditional" training of a librarian.

In the economic administrative it is also difficult to fit the libraries into the frames of the general agreements concerning budgeting and fiscal management in state institutions. The state budget is made for a calendar year and its planning is started in universities and colleges even two years in advance. In theory it is possible to get extra allowances for inestimable expenses, but in practice it is almost impossible. The state budget is a so-called line and item budget, in which the allowances are strictly categorized and given only for one year (book allowances are exceptions, though). The use of book allowances for salaries or travels is forbidden in Finland. To use the income of some services for the expenses of these services - which could solve some economic problems - has for a long time been almost impossible; now it is possible in some cases but still difficult and uncertain. These troubles are known in other state agencies as well, but in some cases libraries suffer more from them. If the regulations that state allowances cannot be used in advance (e.g. for subscription of periodicals) were observed to the very letter, scientific libraries would fail to function.

I have discussed these two questions more in detail since they are examples of a more general problem. Libraries seem to wish regulations which would concern them only, and consider more general regulations harmful; the government instead tries to avoid making regulations which are too specific and concern only some offices and institutions. Detailed rules for an individual institution may in some situation be useful, but later, in a

changed situation, harmful. Planning in state administration never goes into details, and therefore it is difficult to adjust in the libraries. On the other hand we can ask whether librarians' love of detail or lack of knowledge of state administration is the reason why they cannot make use of the general patterns of planning. Scientific libraries are in the above-described situation probably because they do not find themselves identical - or others do not find them so either - with state offices or university institutions. For instance, the central offices in the universities are found identical with state offices.

On the contrary to the planning, the control of state administration is very detailed, however random it may be. It is concentrated on the interpretation of the legality of matters, not on the efficiency or the appropriateness of the activity. The course of the procedure is studied much more than the results, and if any discrepancies are found, they draw much more attention than the obvious ineffectiveness or inappropriateness of the whole process. This is perhaps the reason why librarians want to have particular rules for their use only and not to apply those of general planning.

Libraries produce services, not decisions like most state offices. Services form such a small and new fraction of the activity of the state that there are no special rules for their production, or any rules are not found necessary. We can ask, however, if it is of any use to emphasize the service aspect from libraries' own point, either; since the "service" has become a term *à la mode* at least in Finland, and it is applied almost in anything. Perhaps libraries should instead accentuate the fact that their activity is a part of study and teaching, decision-making etc. and not just humbly serving them?

Legislation both causes inconvenience and gives some support to the administration of scientific libraries; the inconveniences and the lack of sufficient support result partly from real defects in the legislation, partly from the inadequate identity of the libraries.